

**GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA  
DEPARTMENT OF CONSUMER AND REGULATORY AFFAIRS  
OFFICE OF THE ZONING ADMINISTRATOR**



January 21, 2011

Charles Barber  
The George Washington University  
2100 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Suite 250  
Washington, DC 20052

**Re:   Zoning Determination Letter  
      Ross Hall (2300 I Street NW) (Square 41, Lot 40) (the "Property")**

Dear Mr. Barber:

The purpose of this letter is to summarize the issues that we reviewed in our meeting on December 14, 2010. As we discussed, The George Washington University (the "University") has proposed to renovate portions of Ross Hall, which is located on the Property. The Property consists of approximately 87,150 square feet of land area and is located in the R-5-D zone district as well as within the boundaries of the approved Foggy Bottom Campus Plan, which was approved by the Zoning Commission in Order No. 06-11/06-12 (the "Order"). Construction of the existing building was approved in 1970 pursuant to BZA Order No. 10468.

As we discussed, the University intends to renovate and reconfigure two floors of Ross Hall (the "Project"). See plans attached as Exhibit A. As a part of this reconfiguration, the University will construct a stairwell at the northern end of the building. You have indicated that this stairwell is necessary to adhere to the requirements of the building code that are triggered by the building reconfiguration.

***A.    Additional Gross Floor Area Under Condition P-2 of the Order***

Pursuant to Condition P-2 of the Order: "Except for minor renovation projects including those necessary to address building code compliance, no development on Campus resulting in additional density or change in use may be undertaken by the University unless approved by the Commission in accordance with [the Order]" (emphasis added). Based on the language in this condition, I conclude that the Commission intended to permit the University to add gross floor area to or change the use of its existing properties within the campus plan boundaries, provided that the additional GFA or change in use is "minor."

You have indicated that the University must construct approximately 3,094 square feet of additional gross floor area on the Property in order to accommodate the required stairwell. This additional gross floor area is considerably less than 1% of the existing gross floor area of Ross

Hall, which is approximately 345,419 square feet according to your records. You have further indicated that the stairwell is required under Section 1017.3 of the International Building Code, which is incorporated by reference into the D.C. Building Code. See 12A DCMR § 101.2.

Based on the foregoing, I conclude that the proposed increase in density on the Property is permitted under Condition P-2 of the Order, because the additional gross floor area associated with the renovation project is minor and is needed to address building code compliance.

***B. Additional Lot Occupancy Under Section 407 of the Regulations***

Under Section 403, a maximum lot occupancy of 75% is permitted in the R-5-D Zone District.

According to information you provided, the existing building contains approximately 64,637 square feet of building area, and occupies approximately 74.17% of the lot. The proposed stairwell will add approximately 442 square feet of building area, bringing the total lot occupancy to approximately 74.67% of the lot.

Based on the foregoing, I conclude that the proposed addition will comply with the lot occupancy requirements of the Zoning Regulations.

***C. Height***

Under Section 401, a total height of 90 feet is permitted in the R-5-D Zone District. Per the definition of building height in Section 199, when a height of 90 feet or greater is permitted, the height of the building shall be measured to the highest point of the roof excluding parapets not exceeding three feet in height. In other words, parapets up to three feet in height are permitted above the 90-foot height limit. In addition, under Section 411.17, roof structures less than four feet in height are permitted and are not subject to the setback or other requirements regarding roof structures.

You have indicated that the height of the proposed stairwell, as measured to the top of the roof, will be consistent with the existing height of Ross Hall. In addition, you have indicated that a parapet not exceeding three feet in height and mechanical equipment less than four feet in height will be constructed above the roof of the stairwell.

Based on the foregoing, I conclude that the proposed height of the stairwell, as well as the additional three-floor tall parapet and mechanical equipment less than four feet in height, are all permitted under the Zoning Regulations.

***D. Courts***

Section 406 of the Regulations states that an open court shall have a minimum width of 3 inches per foot of height, and that a closed court shall have a minimum width of 4 inches per foot of height and minimum area that is twice the square of the required width. Here, based on a

building height of 90 feet, an open court must have a minimum width of 22'6" feet, and a closed court must have a minimum width of 30 feet and area of 1,800 square feet.

As we discussed, when the building was constructed, the 2300 block of I Street was a public right-of-way. Therefore, when constructed, the open space on the north side of the Property consisted of a single open court that opened onto I Street NW.

Subsequent to the original building construction, the 2300 block of I Street was closed pursuant to D.C. Council action, and the former right-of-way became private property. As a result, the former open court now consists of two courts: (1) an open court that opens onto 24<sup>th</sup> Street NW and (2) a closed court that is located between Ross Hall and Himmelfarb Library. You indicated that the open court has a width of 26'9", which exceeds the minimum width requirement of 22'6" for an open court. You also indicated that the closed court has a minimum width of 39'5" and area of over 6,500 square feet, which exceeds the minimum width and area requirements for a closed court.

Based on the foregoing, I conclude that the Property will continue to conform to the court requirements after the construction of the proposed stairwell.

### **Conclusion**

Based on the foregoing, I conclude that the additional gross floor area and lot occupancy associated with the proposed stairwell is permitted under the Zoning Regulations. I also conclude that the stairwell will comply with the height and court requirements. Please let me know if you have further questions.

Sincerely,



Matthew Le Grant  
Zoning Administrator

Attachment – Exhibit A - Plans

cc: David Avitabile, Goulston & Storrs, PC

File: Determination Ltr for GWU – Ross Hall 2300 I St NW to Barber 1-21-2011